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Why Cruisers, Cruise

Jack B. Hogan, '26

Possibly some cruisers cruise because they are survivors of an Ames Forester's summer camp? We may go back even further for a reason, clear back to the time when some peculiar person established the time honored custom of eating.

Way out northwest, in District 6, of the United State Forest Service, cruising is referred to, officially, as timber surveying. Considerably more information is collected on a timber survey than on an ordinary timber cruise, which usually goes no further than to secure an estimate of the standing merchantable timber.

In making a timber survey, the land divisions made by General Land Office are used as a basis in covering the country. The forty acre tract is the smallest unit considered. For each forty within the project area a map is made showing topography, culture and forest types. For each forty a timber estimate is secured and a record is made which furnishes the following information:

- (1). Sites, determined by heights of trees, soil, moisture, altitude, drainage.
- (2). Condition and quality of timber.
- (3). Damage caused by fire, insects, disease.
- (4). Factors affecting logging, such as slope, undergrowth, windfall, rocks.
- (5). Amount of reproduction by species.

According to the instructions issued by the Forest Service, timber surveys are made for two reasons; "to furnish information for making timber sales and for constructing working plans." After all, there is a technical and scientific reason for sending the noble cruisers out among the squirrels and chipmunks for periods of time, varying from three to six months.

The forest schools of the United States all the way from Yalq (spelled with a J and an i in the Swedish dialect) on west

are filled with embryonic cruisers. These groups of young men are composed of three classes: those who are naturally attracted to the woods, those who learn to like the work because of their experience and those who spend one or **part** of a season with the rougher boys, then return to school and take up the study of some such oddity as pharmacy or barbering. It has always been strongly suspected that this latter class are the ones who overrun the correspondence schools of our country.

In District 6, which is comprised of the states of Oregon, Washington and a small part of California, there are two distinct situations in which one may cruise: the Douglas fir region extending west from the summit of the Cascades to the coast and the western yellow pine region extending east from the Cascades. Conditions in the two regions vary greatly. The Douglas fir country is noted for its steep slopes, thick and high undergrowth, large trees, abundance of moisture, and in most cases, the distance of cruising camps from civilization.

By the majority of woodsmen it is considered more pleasant to work in the yellow pine. Some person has even gone so far as to write a song concerning the tall yellow pine. However there is not a doubt but that a number of songs have been composed concerning the large Douglas fir and its surroundings. These songs are of a spontaneous nature, usually inspired by the gentle touch of a devil's club and it is probably not to be regretted that the authorities do not permit their shipment through the mails.

One of the things that makes life worth while is the fact that exceptions exist. Even in the Douglas fir forests of the Pacific Northwest there are some fine places to live. There are locations valued highly from a recreational standpoint. When it so happens that a party of timber cruisers are permitted to camp near one of those interesting centers of population, they are indeed lucky.

On July first, 1925, a timber survey party of ten men, set up their camp in northwestern Washington at a point where Indian Creek crosses the Olympic highway, approximately fifteen miles from Port Angeles, Washington. In this vicinity the highway is adjacent to the boundary of the Olympic National Forest. It was the purpose of this party to cruise a por-

tion of the National Forest Area. Three quarters of a mile further west, along the highway, is Lake Sutherland with the usual camp ground and opportunities to fish, swim, boat and dance. The proprietor of this summer resort was a good sturdy citizen of Scotch ancestry and if he had not insisted on singing during the lapses and intermissions of the evening dances it is a certainty that nothing detrimental would have been said concerning his character.

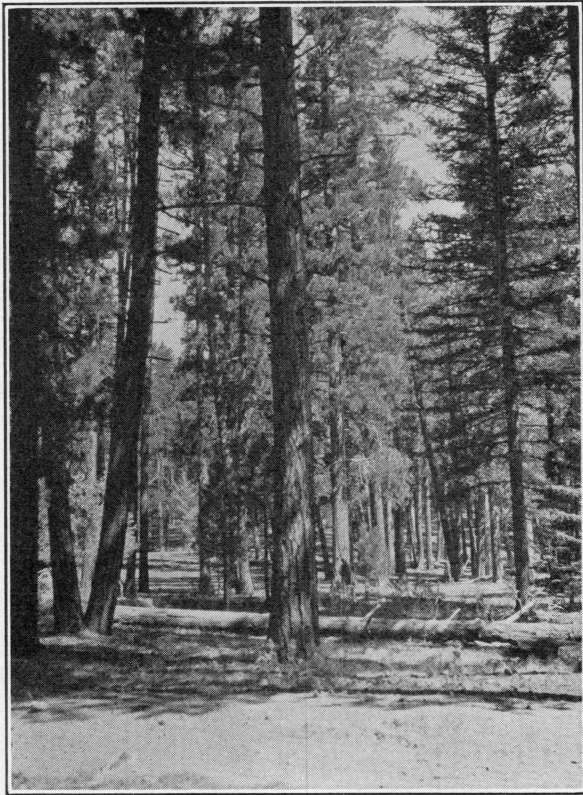
Of course the cruisers invaded the summer resort with an avidity peculiar to men of their nature and station in life. Everything went well until one of the more graceful members of the crew scratched the piano with his hobnailed shoes. From then on an atmospheric coldness was apparent whenever any member of the cruising party appeared within the recreation hall. For a time it seemed as if their sojourn in this part of the country would not be as pleasant as it might have been. However, "in life's darkest moment there is always a ray of light."

Across the lake from the summer resort there was a logging operation being carried on. As is usual with many small outfits the fire prevention laws were observed only when under supervision. The screen had been removed from the smoke stack of the donkey engine, with the result that a few large sparks were emitted and a forest fire was started. All hands including loggers, forest service employees and available tourists were called upon to fight fire. The proprietor of the summer resort was particularly anxious to put out the fire as soon as possible. This part of the country is noted for its scenery and the appearance of the surrounding country is a decided asset to his business. The proprietor of the resort furnished what aid he could. The cruisers as well as the other fire fighters worked with a will and the fire was quickly corralled, with only about fifty acres being burned over.

From this time on the scratches on the piano seemed to be forgotten, at least there was no allusion thereto. Life for the cruisers was just a round of eating, working, dancing and sleeping. Sleeping being the only thing that was curtailed to any extent. Every evening after stowing away the proper amount of nourishment, some member of the party would suggest staying at home and catching up on a little sleep. Then someone

would say there is another keen mamma from Jacksonville, Florida and there is a chance that the Northwestern co-ed didn't leave today. What was the result? You know.

Life is a series of beginnings and endings. While the tourist season was still in full sway a sad departure was made. No more were the cruisers to glory in the impression made upon the American "tumorist" (as one real Forest Ranger affectionately refers to them). There were to be no more opportunities to converse with an eager lady whose great uncle's grandson was a lookout on some lofty peak. In due course of time the timber survey party arrived at its destination—ten miles from the highway, by park trail, up the Hamma Hamma River, which



Western Yellow Pine, Malheur National Forest, Oregon.
Photo by J. D. Guthrie. Courtesy U. S. Forest Service.

crosses the Olympic highway and flows into Hood's Canal at a point approximately fifty miles north of Olympia, Washington. This was the new home. The departure from Lake Sutherland may have been sad, but it did not compare to the arrival on the Hamma Hamma River. From now on the cruisers' lives were a round of eating, working and sleeping, with possibly a little more time being devoted to digging devil club thorns out of their hands.

Now, to give the yellow pine country its due consideration. On July first 1926, two timber survey crews were turned loose on the Malheur Forest of eastern Oregon. The headquarters of this forest are at John Day, Oregon, which is located at the junction of Canyon Creek and the John Day River. Two miles up Canyon Creek is Canyon City, an old time mining town, famous in the days of "62." Thirteen miles east of John Day is Prairie City, referred to by the natives as "Prairie." The traveler going through any one of the three cities would never appreciate their true value. They are neither cosmopolitan nor metropolitan. They are just good examples of eastern Oregon and it is necessary to remain and become acquainted with the people in order to realize their worth.

The John Day Valley is filled with ranches, which for the most part are well kept and have an appearance of prosperity. In practically all cases the appearance can be relied upon as a true indicator. The John Day River heads on the Malheur Forest in the Blue Mountains, southeast of Prairie City. Adjacent to the forest boundary and at a point where the road from Prairie City enters the forest is located the Blue Mountain Hot Springs Summer Resort. The hot springs are a reality and there is plenty of hot water to fill a swimming pool and furnish water for a long string of bath tubs, the bath tubs of course being in a row of bath houses. In addition to the hot water attraction there is a hotel which appears to be a large rambling old fashioned ranch house, part of it is constructed of logs and the remainder is of frame structure. One section of the hotel was at one time part of a fort, built for protection against the Indians. An indefinite number of cabins and tent frames are scattered about the grounds. There are barns, corrals, chicken-houses, a saw mill and a few small buildings. Last but not

important is the dance hall. It is most important because the ordinary person never fully appreciates a bath and a place to eat and rest until she or he has attended one of the all night eastern Oregon struggles.

As soon as the cruisers entered the sacred precincts of the John Day Valley they were informed of the amusements to be had and of the social contacts to be made at the Blue Mountain Hot Springs Summer Resort. Fourth of July presented the first opportunity to the timber survey crews for a visit to this renowned place. The national holiday came on Sunday, which resulted in the celebration starting Saturday night and ending the following Tuesday morning. The citizens from Canyon City, John Day and Prairie City, together with their brethren from the ranches within the Valley, flocked to the resort. In addition, there were a considerable number of tourists present. There were dances each night and on Sunday and Monday afternoons. What more could the cruisers desire? They were well received and well treated by everyone. When the Eastern Oregonians go out for a good time they do just one thing—they have it. Whenever anyone became tired of dancing, he could step outside and be amused by listening to, and watching, some of the descendants of the former Indian fighters. It was evident that blood will tell, and there was usually some sort of fistic or wrestling argument taking place.

As a dance progressed into the night, many male members of the party would disappear. If one cared to look, a number of them could be found lying or rolling around on the park-like areas surrounding the dance hall. The cruisers took advantage of the absences thus created and remained with the dance until early morning called a halt. The ladies, of course, appreciated this attention and from this time on Uncle Sam's topographic mappers and tree counters were referred to as the "Gentlemen Cruisers." With such a start they were off for a successful social season. Dances were held at the summer resort every Saturday night throughout the summer season. At every dance there were from six to eighteen members of the timber survey crews present.

The summer passed, and many of the cruisers returned to their respective institutions of higher learning.

As the cruising season neared its close the final camp was pitched at the Blue Mountain Hot Springs. Gone were the tourists, and the dances had been discontinued, but there were comfortable cabins to live in and plenty of hot water. How many timber cruisers have all the hot water they want, whenever they want it? After a cold, wet day in the woods the swimming pool was the place where one could most efficiently thaw himself out. This camp was a grand climax to a very enjoyable season. Only a few days were spent at the Hot Springs and then, due to the inclement weather, the crew disbanded for the season. Every individual of the timber survey party left the John Day Valley with a feeling of regret.

It is now time for the readers to decide whether or not there is a reason for cruisers, cruising. If it is felt by any person that an apology is due for this meandering conglomeration of exposition, description and narration, it is now offered. Remember, the people who asked the author to write this feeble attempt know him well and he is only an innocent timber cruiser.

